



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich  
County Executive

March 10, 2020

TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass  
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich  
County Executive

RE: House Bill 1524 – *Procurement and Correctional Facilities – Employment Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals* – Support

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It has come to my attention that legislation has been introduced again this year to address the vexing issue of employment for people returning to their communities after incarceration. House Bill 1524 – *Procurement and Correctional Facilities – Employment Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals* – seeks to address this issue by requiring State and local correctional facilities to procure a portion of contracted goods and services from bidders or offerors based on their number of justice-involved employees.

According to the National Reentry Resource Center, funded and administered by the U.S. Department of Justice, roughly 700,000 individuals who had been sentenced to State and federal prisons are released annually to their communities. An even larger component of the reentry challenge for local governments is how to address the employment needs of more than 9 million individuals released from local jails each year. With only about half of incarcerated adults having a high-school degree or its equivalent, finding viable employment for this population will require a wide variety of workforce development strategies from creating incentives for employers to hire formerly incarcerated individuals to leveraging existing resources and job readiness programs that will maximize self-sufficiency.

House Bill 1524 proposes several employment strategies to increase job options for formerly incarcerated individuals including a mandate that businesses contracting with State or local correctional facilities post all jobs on the Maryland Workforce Exchange job board and review applicants with an eye toward hiring formerly incarcerated individuals. Increasing

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transparency in the job market could lead to expanded employment opportunities for individuals who are working to break free of their past and return to their families and communities. The legislation identifies a worthy and important societal goal, and I look forward to contributing to the discussion.

cc: Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee